APPROVED

# Excel Academy Rhode Island

# Minutes

## Board of Trustees Meeting

**Date and Time**
Tuesday September 9, 2025 at 5:30 PM

**Location**
Center for Southeast Asians
270 Elmwood Ave.
Providence, RI 02907

Meeting notice posted publicly by 9/5/25.

**Please note: All items listed on the agenda are subject to a possible vote by the Board of Trustees.**

**Trustees Present**
B. Smiley, C. Chhay, C. Heng, F. Rojas, I. Blake, J. Greenthal, L. Giordano, M. Rivera

**Trustees Absent**
C. Lombardi

**Guests Present**
A. Kaynor, Abeer Khatana, C. Reed, O. Stearns

### I. Opening Items

#### A. Record Attendance

### B. Call the Meeting to Order

B. Smiley called a meeting of the board of trustees of Excel Academy Rhode Island to order on Tuesday Sep 9, 2025 at 5:32 PM.
B. Smiley introduced Abeer Khatana, Deputy Director of Policy with the City of Providence, who will be observing the meeting today.

### C. Public Comment

No members of the public provided comment at this meeting.

### D. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes

L. Giordano made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 06-05-25.
C. Chhay seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## II. Academic Oversight

### A. State of the School Update

O. Stearns provided updates on the state of the schools including the following highlights:

- The Excel RI school added 150 new students at its 622 Woonasquatucket Ave. facility. The school now has grades 5-8 and about 450 students.
- The school is being led by Kate Cushing, whose Head of School candidacy was approved in June. The former Head of School, Kate Ring, is now the founding high school Head of School and is beginning her planning year to launch the new high school program.
- We are fully enrolled, thanks to tremendous work by our Enrollment Team. Our head of enrollment Estevan Puerta just presented a case study at a national conference on our enrollment strategies and tactics.
- Preliminary SY24-25 RICAS data looks promising, but will share more at the next meeting when we have all the data.
- SY24-25 academic data in MA becomes publicly available on Monday and is phenomenal. We will share more at the next meeting once all the data is unembargoed.

F. Rojas added context about the start of school year and noted that the school year is off to a strong start.

M. Rivera asked whether attendance has been impacted by family concerns in the current political climate. O. Stearns shared that we have not observed this so far this year

and that this is in part due to the school team's good work to ensure that families feel supported and safe coming to school.

C. Chhay summarized community meetings and resources that the CSEA is providing to support families in the community during this time.

## III. Real Estate

### A. Real Estate Search Updates & Votes

B. Smiley thanked the Excel community, families, staff, and trustees for showing up in incredible ways with their advocacy efforts and disappointment in the City Council vote outcome.

O. Stearns, C. Reed, and A. Kaynor updated the Board on the real estate search and reviewed current and prospective facility options with the Board.

A. Kaynor reviewed proposed real estate resolutions with the Board.
C. Chhay made a motion to approve the enclosed real estate resolutions as presented.
M. Rivera seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## IV. Governance

### A. Authorize Treasurer to submit annual report filing

B. Smiley made a motion to authorize the Treasurer to submit the annual report filing between Feb. 1, 2025 and May 1, 2025 on behalf of the school and board reflecting its current information and membership.
C. Chhay seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### B. Confirm SY25-26 Committee Assignments

A. Kaynor noted that the Board's SY25-26 Committee assignments were approved in June and have not changed since then, so no vote is needed, and the Committee Overview is provided only for reference.

### C. Approve Updates to FY26 (SY25-26) Board Calendar

A. Kaynor thanked the Board for completing the Doodle poll and noted that we are tabling this topic until we can find scheduling options that work best for the group this year.

### D. Approve Updated Financial Policies & Procedures

J. Greenthal thanked the Finance Team for doing a very good job updating our policies and noted that he had a positive experience working on this project with the Finance Team and representatives from Excel's other two Boards.

A. Kaynor noted that the Finance Committee is authorized to approve routine updates to our financial policies year to year, but that we wanted to bring this topic to the full Board this year because it has been some time since the last overall refresh.
C. Heng made a motion to to approve the updated fiscal policies and procedures retroactively to July 1, 2025.
L. Giordano seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### E. Title IX Policy Approval and Training

A. Kaynor presented the Board with a summary of updates to the SY25-26 Title IX Policy and provided the Board with training on the policy and the Board's role with respect to the policy.
B. Smiley made a motion to approve Excel Academy's SY25-26 Title IX Policy as presented.
C. Heng seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

### F. Ratify SY25-26 Student & Family Handbook, SY25-26 Employee Handbook, and other policy and manual updates (enclosed/linked)

A. Kaynor reviewed the Board's protocol for annual review and approval of policies, manuals, and handbooks and summarized the following notable updates for this year:

- **Title IX Policy:** Reverted to pre-SY24-25 policy language due to August 2024 federal guidelines being overturned.
- **Excel MA Student & Family Handbook:** Merged middle school and high school handbooks into a single document.
- **Employee Handbooks:** Added an AI Policy, consistent with state guidance.

L. Giordano made a motion to ratify the SY24-25 Student & Family Handbook, the SY24-25 Employee Policy Manual, and the additional policies and manuals outlined and linked in the Board packet, as presented.
M. Rivera seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

## V. Finance

### A. FYI - Reminder about FY25 Annual Audit

A. Kaynor provided an update and reminder about the FY25 annual audit meeting schedule, as summarized on the agenda.

## VI. Board Engagement

### A. Upcoming Events

A. Kaynor outlined upcoming events and reminded the Board of the expectation that Board members attend at least one campus visit per year and bring guests to see the school.

J. Greenthal asked that calendar invites be sent to Board members for all visits.

## VII. Closing Items

### A. Adjourn Meeting

M. Rivera made a motion to adjourn the meeting, having conducted the Board's business.
C. Chhay seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:28 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
B. Smiley
List of documents used at the meeting:

- Agenda
- Prior meeting minutes
- Draft resolutions
- Board of Trustees Committee Overview
- Updated financial policies & procedures and executive summary
- Updated school and network governing policies, manuals, and handbooks and executive summary
- SY24-25 Title IX Policy

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The public is welcome to attend any meeting of the Board of Trustees or its subcommittees. If communication assistance (readers/ interpreters/captions) or any other accommodations are needed to ensure equal participation, please contact Arthur Kaynor at akaynor@excelacademy.org at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting. Any changes in the agenda will be posted on Excel Academy Charter School's website, Excel's principal place of business, and will be electronically filed with the Secretary of State at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting. If you would like to attend a Board meeting and provide public comment, please sign up 48 hours in advance here: https://forms.gle/7315BJ7v1bHGGh2Q9.

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